

NEZ PERCE – CLEARWATER NATIONAL FORESTS STANDARDIZED MITIGATION MEASURES JANUARY 2020

Introduction

The intent of this document is to facilitate the appropriate inclusion of mitigation measures in our NEPA documents. Also, this document provides consistent verbiage for many mitigation measures that are consistently used in NEPA documents produced on the Forest(s). Use of this verbiage will minimize inconsistencies when planning and implementing our projects, as well as reduce the redundant writing and editing that is occurring during preparation of NEPA documents.

This will be a “living document” that will be updated and modified, as necessary, to meet the Forests needs into the future. Comments, questions, and suggestions for improvement of this document should be directed to the Forest NEPA Coordinator.

Intended Use

Line officers should direct Interdisciplinary Team (IDT) participants to use the mitigation measures included in this document when addressing similar or recurring resource concerns unless there is a compelling need to deviate. Changes with individual projects should be coordinated with the entire Interdisciplinary Team, IDT Leader, and the appropriate line officer.

The purpose of the list is to provide consistency from analysis to implementation with our forest projects.

** Implementing, modifying or removing certain mitigation measures can alter the environmental effects and/or analysis for other resources; therefore, it is imperative to coordinate prior to including new or modified measure(s). Conversely, by linking a mitigation measure clearly to effects analysis, the necessity of the mitigation measure is better demonstrated.*

IDT specialists will inform the IDT and line officer when suggesting a new mitigation measure or proposing modification of an existing mitigation measure in their specialist report. Likewise, coordination and agreement with appropriate specialists must occur prior to removing or modifying measures in the NEPA document(s). The Line Officer will approve any requests after consultation with the timber contracting unit to ensure that approved variations are implementable.

Design Features or Mitigation Measure

The terms “Design Features” and “mitigation measures” are often used inconsistently in NEPA documents prepared on the Forest. Additionally, many “requirements” are unnecessarily included in the document as both a design criterion and a mitigation measure, producing unnecessary redundancy. Lengthy mitigation sections can cause readers to assume the scope or level of project effects is much greater than what is actually documented in our effects analyses.

The following descriptions should help differentiate between Design Features and mitigation measures and assist IDT members in making the determination for appropriate use.

Design Features

Design Features describe the blueprint for project development and are an integral component of the proposed action. Design Features are generally identified early in the NEPA process as part of developing the proposed action and act as the sideboards for the activities being proposed when moving into and through the effects analysis. Design Features are typically derived from Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines, and Forest Service Manual and Handbook policy and direction. Additionally, design Features often include mandatory contract provision requirements (“B” Provisions or required “C” Provisions), BMPs, Idaho State Water Quality Standards, Idaho Forest Practices Act Rules,

and similar laws, rules or policy. Generally, design Features reiterate the things we are required to do to ensure our decision document is supported by an environmental analysis that is consistent with the Forest Plan and applicable laws and regulations. As such, design Features do not need to be itemized or individually listed in every NEPA document...they are requirements that are inclusive by reference.

For the Nez Perce - Clearwater Forests, a white paper has been developed that list many of the most common design features that are applied to projects across the Forests. This paper should be placed in the project record for each activity that is planned.

Mitigation Measures

Mitigation is defined by CEQ in 40 CFR 1508.20. Mitigation measures are those actions we take to avoid, minimize, rectify, reduce, eliminate, or compensate for environmental impacts caused by our projects. Mitigation includes:

- (1) Avoiding the impact altogether by not taking a certain action or parts of an action.
- (2) Minimizing impacts by limiting the degree or magnitude of the action and its implementation.
- (3) Rectifying the impact by repairing, rehabilitating, or restoring the affected environment.
- (4) Reducing or eliminating the impact over time by preservation and maintenance operations during the life of the action.
- (5) Compensating for the impact by replacing or providing substitute resources or environments.

The Forest(s) applies all laws, rules, regulations, policy, FP standards and guidelines (collectively called “Standard Design Features”) in the development of the project proposal and alternatives. As applied, these “Standard Design Features” ensure consistency with Forest Plan standards and guidelines and environmental regulations. However, the Forest(s) is committed to providing additional protections in certain circumstances so has come up with this list of mitigation measures that may be applied at certain times and in certain areas to provide additional protections to resources. These additional mitigation measures (in the past, the Forest has interchangeably called them “Design Features” or “best management practices”) are included in the project’s design as integral components of the proposed action, are implemented with the proposed action, and are clearly described as part of the proposed action that the Forest will perform as part of a project. In this application, the Forest(s) is addressing resource protection early in the decision-making process and conducting the appropriate level of NEPA review.

Mitigation measures address site-specific factors about the project that need protection over and above those already built into the design through “Standard Design Features”. Mitigation measures are directly tied to an effect or potential for effect and as such should also be identified in the effects analysis with regard to the “benefit” or contribution relative to the disclosed effect(s). Issues drive mitigation measures, along with alternatives and effects analysis. Mitigation measures should be tracked throughout the document.

Depending on the nature and scope of the proposed action and its alternatives, the applicable design features may be sufficient to ensure consistency with Forest Plan standards and guidelines and environmental regulations. Where that is the case, mitigation measures may not be necessary. Where our site-specific analyses show implementation of basic design features would not be adequate to ensure consistency with standards and regulations, mitigation measures may be needed. In cases where mitigation is necessary, our monitoring plans should include monitoring of selected measures.

MITIGATION MEASURE PICK LIST

APPLIES TO PROJECT	SOIL RESOURCES		HOW IMPLEMENTED & EFFECTIVENESS
<input type="checkbox"/>	SR-1	In Units X, X, X locate and design skid trails, landings and yarding corridors prior to activities to minimize the area of detrimental soil effects. Space tractor skid trails no less than 80 feet apart (edge to edge), except where converging on landings. <i>*This does not preclude the use of feller bunchers.</i>	Implemented through Mandatory Contract Provisions Effectiveness: High, based on experience
<input type="checkbox"/>	SR-2	In Units X, X, X, harvested with ground-based equipment, pile slash in up to 50% of the unit area.	Implemented through Mandatory Contract Provisions Effectiveness: Moderate, based on experience
<input type="checkbox"/>	SR-3	Retain and/or return green tops within units and allow green foliage to over-winter 1 year prior to burning in Units X, X, X.	Implemented through Mandatory Contract Provisions Effectiveness: Moderate, based on experience
<input type="checkbox"/>	SR-4	Winter logging is required in Units X, X, X.	Implemented through Contract Provisions Effectiveness: High, based on experience
<input type="checkbox"/>	SR-5	Winter logging is allowed only during frozen conditions which are defined as 4 inches of frozen ground or a barrier of unpacked snow greater than two feet in depth and packed snow one foot in depth.	Implemented through Contract Provisions Effectiveness: High, based on experience
<input type="checkbox"/>	SR-6	Keep piles less than 10 feet in height in Units X, X, X	Implemented through Mandatory Contract Provisions Effectiveness: High, based on experience
<input type="checkbox"/>	SR-7	Where available, in Units X, X, X on slopes greater than 60%, 50% of the existing canopy should be retained either in isolated clumps or distributed across the slope. <i>*only use for non-landslide prone areas – if landslide prone, then PACFISH/INFISH will apply</i>	Implemented through Contract Provisions Effectiveness: Moderate, based on experience
ACCESS MANAGEMENT & PUBLIC SAFETY			
<input type="checkbox"/>	AM-1	Coordinate with the contractors and local organization(s) responsible for trail grooming. Will develop alternative parking, plowing, and timing agreement on groomed snowmobile routes.	Implemented through Contract Provisions Effectiveness: High, based on experience
<input type="checkbox"/>	AM-2	Prohibit log haul on road(s) XX - XX on weekends (all day Saturday and Sunday) and on Federally recognized holidays from (date) through (date).	Implemented through Contract Provisions Effectiveness: High, based on experience
WILDLIFE			
<input type="checkbox"/>	WL-1	Limit spring broadcast burning In Units X, X, X, that to protect (species).	Implemented through Rx Burn and Silviculture plans Effectiveness: High, dictated by Rx Burn and Silviculture plans.

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<input type="checkbox"/>	WL-2	Prohibit winter all activities from (date) through (date) in Units XX-XX to retain security and reduce stress for wintering ungulates.	Implemented through Contract Provisions Effectiveness: High, easily determined by FS staff, and contract compliance.
<input type="checkbox"/>	WL-3	Prohibit all activities within Units XX - XX from May 15 through June 15 to avoid impacts on ungulate calving/fawning.	Implemented through Contract Provisions Effectiveness: High, easily determined by FS staff, and contract compliance.
<input type="checkbox"/>	WL-4	Where practical, retain sufficient hiding cover to provide a visual screen for wildlife security along roads X, X, X. *Hiding Cover: Vegetation capable of hiding 90% of a standing elk from view of a human at 200 ft. or less.	Implemented through sale layout and prep prior to contract implementation Effectiveness: Moderate, some variability in forest cover, existing openings, etc.
<input type="checkbox"/>	WL-5	Where available, retain forested areas greater than one half (1/2) acre containing Pacific yew in Units X, X, X where they meet the Features of moose winter habitat (i.e., at least 30% understory canopy of yew, overstory canopy of more than 50% closure, and less than 30% slope). No broadcast burning within retained yew areas. If pile burning, pile no closer than 50 feet from retained patches	Implemented through sale layout and prep prior to contract implementation Effectiveness: Moderate, some areas missed during layout, not recognized by operator during implementation, or not avoidable during broadcast burning.
FISHERIES			
<input type="checkbox"/>	FF-1	In Units X, X, X, OR Road(s) X, X, X, allow instream activities in fish bearing streams between (date) and (date). These dates may be site-specifically adjusted through coordination with Central Idaho Level 1 team review and approval. <i>*Only required if ESA listed fish are near a project site where they may be affected. The dates are dependent on the ESA species present and can vary by species.</i>	Implemented through Contract Provisions Effectiveness: High, based on experience and local monitoring.
<input type="checkbox"/>	FF-2	Avoid direct ignition of fuels within RHCAs	Implemented through Forest Service action Effectiveness: High, based on experience and local monitoring.
<input type="checkbox"/>	FF-3	All reconstructed and temporary constructed road segments within RHCAs would be graveled 100ft. on either side of the crossing upon completion of reconstruction/construction	Implemented through Mandatory and other Contract Provisions Effectiveness: High, based on experience and scientific monitoring.
NOXIOUS WEEDS			
<input type="checkbox"/>	NW-1	Use Forest Service approved native plant species or non-native annual species mixes and mulches that have been certified weed-free seed and mulch.	Implemented through Contract Provisions Effectiveness: Moderate, based on experience
RARE PLANTS			
<input type="checkbox"/>	RP-1	Protect TES plant species and/or potential habitat identified at any point during implementation and notify the unit botanist. <i>* (Use for non-Veg projects only – Covered by Mandatory Contract Provisions for timber sale projects)</i>	Implemented through Mandatory Contract Provisions Effectiveness: High, based on experience

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ARCHAEOLOGY			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	A-1	<p>Ground-disturbing activities would be halted if cultural resources are discovered until an Archaeologist can properly evaluate and document the resources in compliance with 36 CFR 800.</p> <p><i>*(Use for non-Veg projects only – Covered by Mandatory Contract Provisions for timber sale projects)</i></p>	<p>Implemented through Mandatory Contract Provisions</p> <p>Effectiveness: High, based on experience</p>
VISUALS			
<input type="checkbox"/>	VI-1	Within retention viewsheds, location of skyline corridors and skid trails should be designed to minimize visual impacts in Unit(s) (X, X, X).	<p>Implemented through sale layout and prep prior to contract implementation</p> <p>Effectiveness: Moderate, based on experience</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	VI-2	Within the (landing/retention viewshed) adjacent to (Road XXX, Landing XXX, Unit XXX); slash, root wads, and other debris should be removed, buried, burned, chipped or lopped to a height of 2 feet or less. If slash is buried, locate in previously disturbed areas where possible.	<p>Implemented through Mandatory and other Contract Provisions (specific Provision depends on activity that creates the material)</p> <p>Effectiveness: High, based on experience</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	VI-3	Within retention viewsheds adjacent to (X) road and/or Units (X, X, X), cut stumps to 8 inches or less in height in harvest areas located within 200 feet of the roadway.	<p>Implemented through Mandatory Contract Provision and Sale Area Map</p> <p>Effectiveness: High, based on experience</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	VI-4	Units (X, X, X) should have a higher retention of leave trees within the harvest units. Unit boundaries would attempt to emulate natural openings if possible. If retention is accomplished through leave areas, they would range from ¼ to 3 acres in size and may include leave areas adjacent to unit boundaries <u>and</u> retention areas for riparian zones.	<p>Implemented through sale layout and prep prior to contract implementation</p> <p>Effectiveness: Moderate, based on experience</p>